

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03 SCA-01 /077 W

-----053032 231434Z /44

R 231120Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8977

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 1543

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, OEXC, US, CT

SUBJ: DETENTION OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS

REF: BANGUI 1524, 1530

1. THERE ARE STILL MANY GAPS IN OUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE AFFAIR OF THE TWO JOURNALISTS. BOKASSA MADE CLEAR AT BERENGO JULY 21 THAT THEIR DETENTION WAS "SET OFF" BY GOLDSMITH'S DECISION TO FILE HIS STORY WITH THE LOCAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE JULY 14. BOKASSA'S ACTIONS THUS FAR SUGGEST TO US THAT: A) HE MAY BE CONFUSED; AND, B) HE WANTS TO CONTINUE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES.

2. WE SAY CONFUSED BECAUSE IT TOOK BOKASSA SIX DAYS TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT RANDAL, DURING WHICH TIME THE CAE GOVERNMENT DID NOT EVEN QUESTION RANDAL. IN ADDITION, BOKASSA CONSISTENTLY MIXED UP THE TWO JOURNALISTS IN HIS PRESENTATION TO THE ASSEMBLED MINISTERS AND DIPLOMATS JULY 21, AND HE RAISED WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE THE RED HERRING OF GOLDSMITH'S ALLEGED SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP. (EVEN IF GOLDSMITH TECHNICALLY HAS DUAL NATIONALITY, HE APPARENTLY THINKS OF HIMSELF AS BRITISH.)

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3. WE ALSO BELIEVE THERE IS EVIDENCE BOKASSA WISHES TO KEEP UP GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. ADMITTEDLY, HE DENIED US CONSULAR ACCESS FOR SIX DAYS, BUT ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH, THE CAE HAS NO CONCEPT OF ITS OBLIGATIONS IN THAT REGARD. BOKASSA CHOSE TO STAGE A PUBLIC "SHOW TRIAL," BUT THAT TOO IS HIS STYLE. INDEED, IF HE HAD BEEN REALLY ANGRY HE WOULD HAVE

DENIED THE CHARGE PERMISSION TO SPEAK, JUST AS HE ONCE REFUSED PERMISSION TO THE GERMAN CHARGE UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, WE NOTE THAT BOKASSA BACKED AWAY FROM SOME OF HIS MOST OUTRAGEOUS STATEMENTS EVEN BEFORE THE END OF THE SESSION AT BERENGO JULY 21, AND THE CAE PRESS RELEASE (BANGUI 1530) WAS MILD COMPARED TO WHAT BOKASSA SAID AT BERENGO.

4. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND? WE BELIEVE THAT WHATEVER THE OUTCOME WITH GOLDSMITH WE SHOULD PROTEST PROMPTLY IN WRITING OUR DISPLEASURE ABOUT THE DENIAL OF CONSULAR ACCESS TO RANDAL AND OUR INABILITY FOR FIVE DAYS TO OBTAIN AN APPOINTMENT WITH ANYONE IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO WAS IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS RANDAL'S DETENTION WITH US. THE CHARGE RAISED THESE PROBLEMS IN HIS PRESENTATION AT BERENGO (BANGUI 1524). WOULD APPRECIATE SOONEST THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON LANGUAGE, PARTICULARLY CONCERNING THE DENIAL OF CONSULAR ACCESS. WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THIS PROTEST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER GOLDSMITH'S RELEASE.

5. WE ASSUME THAT FURTHER USG RESPONSE WILL DEPEND ON WHAT HAPPENS TO GOLDSMITH AND WILL COME FIRST IN THE FORM OF RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES AND THEN IN THE FORM OF ACTIONS AS WE REACH DECISION MAKING POINTS ON INDIVIDUAL BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PROGRAMS. WITH REGARD TO BILATERAL PROGRAMS, WE HAVE JUST SIGNED THE ONE OUTSTANDING AID AGREEMENT AND HAVE JUST RECEIVED THE MAIN BATCH OF PEACE CORPS TRAINEES FOR 1977. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME MINOR OPERATIONAL DECISIONS ON THE HORIZON WHICH THE DEPARTMENT MAY CONFIDENTIAL

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WISH TO CONSIDER EVEN NOW, KEEPING IN MIND THAT THE BEST THAT CAN HAPPEN IS THAT GOLDSMITH WILL BE RELEASED PROMPTLY AND IN GOOD CONDITION. WE ASSUME, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL WISH TO DROP CONSIDERATION OF AN IVP GRANT TO ATTEND THE SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE FOR THE MAYOR OF BANGUI, WHO HAPPENS TO BE THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AS WELL. WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT MAY IN ADDITION WISH TO BRIEF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE ON THE SITUATION IN CASE IT SHOULD AFFECT THE VISIT BY THE AMERICAN BASKETBALL TEAM SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 9 TO 21. WE ARE IN THE MEANTIME PROCEEDING WITH PLANS FOR VISIT (SEE SEPTTEL). SMITH

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## Message Attributes

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